

Criteria for 2004 Western Wildland Urban Interface Grant Program

For Federal Fiscal Year 2003, Congress has provided increased funding assistance to states through the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs. The focus of much of the additional funding was mitigating risk in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. In the West, \$15 million of State Fire Assistance (SFA) funding was available and awarded through a competitive process with emphasis on hazard fuel reduction, information and education, and community and homeowner action. This portion of the National Fire Plan was developed to assist interface communities manage the unique hazards they find around them. Long-term solutions to interface challenges require informing and educating people who live in these areas about what they and their local organizations can do to mitigate these hazards.

It is anticipated that Congress will continue its support in FFY 2004 for programs in the WUI, although the level of funding won't be known until Fall 2003.

The 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy focuses on assisting people and communities in the WUI to moderate the threat of catastrophic fire through the four broad goals of improving prevention and suppression, reducing hazardous fuels, restoring fire-adapted ecosystems, and promoting community assistance. This grant opportunity may be used to apply for financial assistance for hazardous fuels and educational projects within those four goals.

Goal #1 - Improve Prevention:

Reduce the risks to homes and private property through expanded outreach and education about wildfire prevention through the use of programs such as Firewise. Homeowners and local government bear much of the responsibility for improving the defensibility of homes in the interface but may lack the knowledge and information regarding what needs to be done and how to do it. Additionally, they may lack the experience and expertise to deliver educational outreach programs to individuals and communities. States can provide the leadership needed to coordinate, develop and distribute educational materials and partnering between homeowners, communities, insurance companies and government agencies.

Goal #2 - Reduce Hazardous Fuels:

Fuel reduction projects and vegetation treatments have been identified as a means of mitigating wildfire hazards. These are projects that remove or modify fuels in and/or adjacent to WUI development. Effective fuels mitigation treatments can be implemented across jurisdictional boundaries, on adjoining private lands, or within the respective communities. The states can facilitate the required coordination, collaboration, and partnering of these projects. Projects of this type include fuel breaks, thinning, pruning, landscape modifications, etc. The overall purpose is to modify or break up the fuels in such a way as to lessen catastrophic fire and its threat to public and firefighter safety and damage to property. Project proposals should consider all elements required to implement treatments on the ground, which includes acquiring the necessary permits and consultations needed to complete plans and assessments.

Goal #3 – Restore Fire-adapted Ecosystems:

Millions of acres of forest and rangeland face high risks of catastrophic fire due to deteriorating ecosystem health and drought. One way to prevent future large, catastrophic wildfires from threatening communities is by carrying out appropriate treatments (such as prescribed burning or thinning) to restore and rehabilitate forest and grassland health in and adjacent to the WUI. Such treatments have reduced the severity of wildfires, and may have additional desirable outcomes, such as providing sustainable environmental, social

and economic benefits. Projects require planning, consultation, design, and sometime contracting, and may take several years to fully implement. Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of treatments is usually necessary.

Goal #4 – Promote Community Assistance:

Creating conditions in and around individual structures that will limit the transmission of fire from wildland to structures is basic to reducing the fire hazard in the Interface. This is a responsibility of homeowners and communities. The states can facilitate these actions through safety inspections; demonstration projects; training and education of homeowners, officials and service personnel; fostering fire safe groups; and coordination of projects, services, and supplies.

These project categories may be complementary to one another. States are encouraged to identify local needs and submit proposals using one or a combination of the grant focus elements. Needs in any community depend on local fuels, topography, organization, public knowledge of the issues, and the will to address the issues.

Examples of Projects that Qualify (not all-inclusive)

Goal #1- Improve Prevention:

FireWise or similar programs
Living with Fire newspaper inserts
Fire education components to Project Learning Tree
Fire prevention projects
Pamphlets, brochures, handouts

Goal #2 - Hazardous Fuels Reduction:

Defensible space around homes and structures
Shaded fuel breaks
Fuels reduction beyond defensible space
Removal of slash including piling and burning, mulching, grinding, etc.
Prescribed fire

Goal #3 – Restore Fire-adapted Ecosystems:

Fuels reduction beyond defensible space
Removal of slash including piling and burning, mulching, grinding, etc.
Prescribed fire
Thinning
Promote the establishment of native plants

Goal #4 - Homeowner and Community Action:

Homeowner-association sponsored fuels reduction projects
Municipal, fire district, county coordination of slash disposal
Multi-jurisdictional hazard reduction projects

Examples of Projects that Do Not Qualify (not all inclusive)

Purchase of fire department equipment (try VFA Grant Program)

Small business start-up funding

Research and development projects (try Economic Action Program)

Preparedness and suppression capacity building (other SFA funds)